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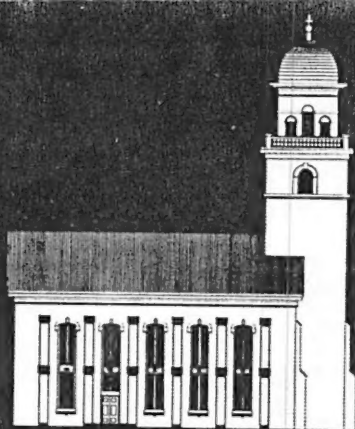


From:

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Save the Tabernacle

The Building

The Wasatch Stake Tabernacle in Heber City, Utah was erected in 1887-1889 by the Mormon pioneers to provide a meeting place for all the people of that beautiful valley.

The entire project was built with donated labor and materials. The red sandstone was quarried by hand from the mountains east of Heber City near Lake Creek and hauled to the site by church members who provided their own teams.

An early historian, duly impressed with the edifice as it neared completion, preserved this information: "The building is 50 x 95 feet...thirty feet in height to the square. It is built on a heavy foundation, which is five feet wide at the bottom, and tapers upward to three feet at the top. The walls are two feet thick...covered with a self-supporting wood and iron roof. The tower is built of rock and extends about ten feet above the ridge of the roof. From this point the tower will be completed in red wood and metal extending about twenty-five feet, making it in all about ninety feet high to the top of the weather vane. The tower is fourteen feet square...the walls of the building are strengthened by buttresses on the sides, front and rear....Galleries are erected on each side and end. The capacity is 1,500...."

The good people of Heber City, so many of whom had toiled and sacrificed to build it, quite naturally took special pains to furnish and maintain their beautiful new Stake House. The floors were scrubbed and bleached with homemade soap; homemade carpets were carefully laid down the aisles; the hard benches were sanded and smoothed and polished. Pot-bellied stoves were set in each of the four corners, coal oil lamps were hung from the ceiling, and finally, a large bell was placed in the tower. The surrounding grounds were landscaped and cottonwood trees were planted; fresh garden flowers were brought in to decorate the impressive three-tiered "stand." Indeed, this building was something of which to be proud.

The Dedication

On a spring day in Heber Valley 76 years ago, an Apostle of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints stood in the newly-completed Tabernacle and offered a prayer of dedication.

"We ask Thee to bless the ground upon which this building stands, bless the foundation that it may remain firm and unmoved...."

Francis M. Lyman said a great deal more in his dedicatory prayer on that May 5, 1889, but in those words he voiced what was in the hearts of the pioneers of Heber Valley who had built this stately edifice with their own hands and their own native red sandstone.

And from old records comes the message of George Q. Cannon, then a member of the LDS First Presidency, who that day spoke at the dedicatory services. They are not recorded verbatim, as is the dedicatory prayer, but summarized by someone who set down, in his own earnest words, the gist of President Cannon's talk.

"He hoped that this house would be kept pure," the long-ago minute record says. "He said it was now completed and dedicated and should be maintained in its sacredness from that time forth."

The Decision

Today, a new generation must decide the fate of this magnificent pioneer edifice. After three-quarters of a century as the most prominent landmark of Heber Valley, an imminent decision must be made: Should this historic building be retained, serving as a civic and cultural center, or should it be razed? Its destruction would make way for a new, more adequate church building on its site. However, a more suitable site for the new church building is available in a nearby residential area. The new site can be purchased and would be exchanged for the old Tabernacle and its surrounding grounds. And, the old building, if saved now, must be assured proper maintenance throughout the years to come.

Plans for saving the building have been discussed with members of the First Presidency and the leaders of the Wasatch Stake of the LDS Church, the Heber City Council, and a great many interested people of Heber Valley, and people beyond the valley. The consensus is that this fine pioneer structure should be saved and be utilized for cultural programs.

The Potential

The Tabernacle is excellently suited for dramatic and musical presentations as well as for town meetings. Many theater and musical groups are interested in appearing in this building. Particularly, the college and LDS-MIA groups would welcome a further opportunity to present their programs after the usual long preparation and brief run. These programs, enhanced by the authentic surroundings of the pioneer culture, will be of great interest to the people of Utah and to tourists as well.

The old social hall to the rear of the Tabernacle affords a fine site for dynamic educational displays which relate the history of the valley and its people. The facilities of that building are also well suited for art exhibits, including traveling displays and for the associated historical records which are of greatest interest at the site of the events.

A Response

In a special benefit performance, the 1965 LDS-MIA June Conference Road Shows and other talent played to a full house in the old Tabernacle on the evening of June 23. The program was magnificent and was an indication of the fine entertainment to come in the future.

Comment by the road show people was that the building is a set in and of itself; that there is a closeness between the audience and the cast which couldn't be achieved in a place of less quaint atmosphere. The audience's response that evening was indeed felt by the performers. One group commented, "Heber City, we love you--We will come back anytime."

The Tabernacle was filled. The audience was pleased. The performance was in the proper tradition of the valley--and this will be continued into the future. The evening of entertainment was opened and closed with prayer. Even the old bell rang out for curfew at 9:00 P.M.

The Tabernacle -- Criteria for Preservation

Sometimes there are numerous reminders of the past which have somehow survived the neglect of generations. It is impractical to preserve all old buildings--just because they are old. Sensing this dilemma to preserve or not to preserve, historians have wrestled with the problem for some time. They eventually developed a set of criteria to guide preservationists in their endeavors. These criteria have been adopted by national organizations, such as the American Association for State and Local History and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, an organization chartered by Congress to work for the preservation of historic sites and buildings throughout the United States.

The Tabernacle certainly meets all of the criteria:

(1) ... in being significantly associated with the history of the area--for herein is reflected all the religious, cultural and social aspirations of the settlers of Heber Valley;

(2) ... in that the building is unique--there being no other such building in Heber Valley and in its being one of the few remaining outstanding church structures left in Utah;

(3) ... in that it is significantly associated with the lives of important people--for those early leaders who were called by the Church to found a settlement in this valley were indeed "Greats" of their age.

(4) ... in that it is practical and feasible to preserve and restore the structure--for it is in comparatively good condition.

The American Institute of Architects' "Committee for the Preservation of Historic Buildings in the State of Utah", composed of George Cannon Young, Fred L. Markham and Georgius Cannon:

"Insofar as possible those buildings constructed in pioneer times should be retained. They are very tangible evidence of the history of our individual communities. Aside from the sentimental attachment which the older members of the community hold, the buildings remain as a reminder of the fine quality of craftsmanship and design which underlay the work of the community's founders. In our opinion, every possible effort should be made to retain this structure.

The Tabernacle -- Its Structure

Warren D. Curtis, professional soils and foundations engineer:

"From examination of the structure, there was no evidence of settlement that would indicate a present or past condition of soil instability. A few minor cracks have developed in the past. There is no evidence of continuing movement."

David L. Sargent, professional structural engineer:

"The basic structure of the Heber Tabernacle appears to be sound after maintenance-type repairs are made."

The Tabernacle -- Dramatic Presentations

Kent T. Larsen, Director of Wasatch High School Speech Department:

"I have used the tabernacle to produce approximately 50 productions in the past 11 years. I have found that it carries a great deal of tradition and the atmosphere for dramatic productions is excellent."

Harold I. Hansen, Chairman of the Dramatic Arts Department of Brigham Young University:

"There is every reason to believe that the building with slight alterations would make a fine plant for staging our plays. Let me assure you that we would be willing to plan productions for such a facility."

Stanley Russon, Chairman Drama Committee, YMMIA General Board:

"This building has tremendous practical merit. It can be used as an invaluable center for the cultural arts....With little cost the interior of the Tabernacle could be remodeled into a perfect setting for the performing arts..."

Tom Carlin, Chairman, Board of Directors, Salt Lake Playmakers:

"The tabernacle is ideally located to become a convenient center for the performing arts and with proper projection, could become a national tourist center, perhaps as well known as the famed Highlands Festival in remote Southern Virginia."

Lethe Tatge, writer and dramatist, Midway, Utah:

"In the programs in which I have participated at the Tabernacle, I have found this building to be ideally suited for drama, readings, and religious pageants."

The Tabernacle - for Music

El Roy Van Wagoner, Head of the Music Department of Wasatch High School:

"In my several years of experience with performances in the Tabernacle, I have found that it is ideal for chamber music, choral groups and strings..."

David Austin Shand, of the University of Utah Music Department:

"I can envision that an era of great achievement lies ahead for the Heber Tabernacle.... In a local way the Bonneville Strings under my direction would most assuredly be honored to give presentations there yearly. I can think of any number of groups which would be honored at such an invitation."

Richard Nibley, Concertmaster, Utah Valley Symphony:

"The privilege of performing in Heber's historic tabernacle would be a welcome extension of our growing activities. The Utah Valley Symphony has smaller groups made up of its members; string quartets, wind ensembles, etc., that would thrill to play in the grateful acoustics of this noble structure.

"Please call on me if there is any service we can give to save this great inheritance from becoming one more plaque."

Town Hall, Art Gallery, Museum

Guy S. McDonald, local businessman, member of the Heber City Council: "The governing bodies of the community, the Wasatch County Commissioners, the Heber City Council, the Board of Education of the Wasatch County School District, should conduct open meetings at the Tabernacle."

Dr. George S. Dibble, Professor of Art, University of Utah:

"Invitational exhibitions representing local and national artists are held in many community centers on an annual basis."

Carl Jones, curator, Temple Square Museum, Salt Lake City:

"After all the effort that has gone into saving the Tabernacle and other old buildings on the Tabernacle Block, I recommend that some of the area of each building be set aside for appropriate interpretive exhibits."

The People of the Valley

To the many descendents of those pioneers who came to this valley and built the community, this wonderful Tabernacle is not only a landmark, it is the heart of the valley. In fact, the history of this valley is very much the history of the Church here.

Many are the visitors who are drawn to the community because of an interest in the people, their church, their history and their culture.

The Funds

How, then, shall the Tabernacle and its site be secured?

The City of Heber has pledged a major part of the funds necessary. In a resolution supporting the acquisition of the Tabernacle site as a park and historic and cultural center, the Heber City Council provided for the sale of undeveloped city property with the proceeds being applied to this purchase.

The committee has already raised in excess of \$8,000. This, added to the amount anticipated by the city from the sale of its land, will leave approximately \$18,000 to be raised, which includes funds for immediate repairs and the first year's maintenance of the interior.

The contributions for this program may be mailed to: Save the Tabernacle Fund, First Security Bank, Heber City, Utah.

The Responsibilities

The city, in its action to secure the site with the assistance of contributed funds, has specified that the acquisition was subject to acceptance by the Save the Tabernacle Committee of responsibility for renovation and repair of the interior of the building. The city will assume the responsibility for the maintenance of the exterior of the building and for the care of the grounds. The Committee has accepted the responsibility for the interior maintenance and also for programming of activities.

In order to more effectively provide for the future, a permanent non-profit corporation is being organized in Heber Valley to continue the work of the Committee. This organization will develop funds for cultural, educational, and historic purposes, particularly including the preservation and restoration of the Tabernacle and associated buildings and grounds.

The Future

What shall each community leave to posterity! Must the finest influences of earlier days fade from view? Can we not set apart the significant architectural achievements in each city and town as a record of our cultural growth? Generations to come will find few visible landmarks of the greatness of the past if we fail to recognize our responsibility to the future.

The art and architecture of a community becomes part of the people; it belongs to their lives--a stability in a changing world.

Your support is needed now. Within the next few days the balance of funds must be raised for acquisition of the building and its site, and for assuring future maintenance. Without these funds there will not be an historic, cultural center for the future.

Please consider what you can contribute--and then send it now.

**The Committee for the Preservation
of the Heber Tabernacle**

The Tabernacle -- Its Place in the Valley

George B. Everton, Sr., president, the National Society of the Sons of the Utah Pioneers:

"The National Board of the Sons of Utah Pioneers...voted unanimously to go on record as favoring the preservation of this historic landmark. Too many of our buildings--worthy pioneer relics--are being destroyed...."

Mrs. Kate Carter: National President, Daughters of the Utah Pioneers:

"We want to help. We will send word to the 1125 Camp Captains of the Daughters of the Pioneers."

Ferrin Whitaker, artist, Midway, Utah:

"If demolished, this old edifice cannot be replaced... We must plan for its usage...."

D. James Cannon, General Manager of Pro-Utah, Inc.:

"There is significant economic value to a community which both preserves and utilizes its historic features. Evidence clearly indicates that visitors are attracted to areas which have 'community personality.'"

Harold P. Fabian, Chairman of the Utah State Park and Recreation Commission:

"That building, more than three-quarters of a century old, has been the shrine of the spiritual life of three or more generations of the people of the Heber Valley. A Cultural Center, where the history and tradition of the Valley can be interpreted to the visitor, and where the talents of the people can be entertainingly enjoyed, is all quite in line with the purposes of the Utah State Park and Recreation Commission and of the U. S. Forest Service in their plans for developing the mountains bounding the Valley on the West as one of the outstanding recreational areas of Western America."

Everett L. Cooley, Director, Utah State Historical Society:

"Every Society, throughout history, which has found values in its achievements, seeks to pass on to succeeding generations "reminders" of the past. The Tabernacle serves that purpose for Heber Valley...."

"As far as use and development, the Tabernacle and Social Hall could become significant adjuncts to a cultural center for Heber. The state is in need of a good, interpretive historical museum. Such a museum does not presently exist in the state. Heber City could be the first community to lay claim to such a distinction."

Dr. Wallace Stegner, Western author, director of the Creative Writing Center and professor of English, Stanford University:

"Your effort to save the Heber Tabernacle deserves support throughout Utah. Every notable building and monument helps create its addition for Westerners who are a people nearly without history. If you can preserve this lovely old historical tabernacle it will become more precious each year."

**To: Save the Tabernacle Fund
First Security National Bank
Heber City, Utah**

Enclosed find my contribution of.....dollars
for the save the Heber Tabernacle Fund.

Name _____

Address _____
